

The Abraham Du Bois House
Near Frankfort, Hillsborough Township
Somerset County, New Jersey

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey
Seymour Williams, F.A.I.A., District Officer
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

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The Abraham Du Bois House
Near Frankfort, Hillsborough Township
Somerset County, New Jersey

Owner: Charles Eisler

Date of Erection: 1757

Architect:

Builder: Abraham Du Bois

Present Condition: Good

Number of Stories: One story, cellar, and garret

Materials of Construction: Foundation - local brown-
stone

Exterior walls - brownstone

Interior walls - plaster on
studding

Inside brick chimneys

Roof - wood shingles

Historical Data:

Abraham² Du Bois, born 26 September 1657 in Mannheim, Germany, son of Louis¹ Du Bois a Huguenot refugee from France, died 7 October 1731 in New Paltz, Ulster County, New York, survivor of the twelve original Patentees of that town. By a deed of 25 June 1708, Robert Burnet of Freehold, New Jersey, conveyed to Abraham Du Bois of New Paltz, New York, for 165 pounds 12 shillings money of New York, a rectangular tract of 690 acres fronting the lower bank of the south branch of Raritan River about a half mile and extending southeastwards over two miles. This

Abraham² Du Bois of New Paltz, New York, by his will of 1 October 1731, devised his land on Raritan River in New Jersey to his son Abraham.

Abraham³ Du Bois, the builder of the house here considered, was born 17 April 1685 in New Paltz, New York, son of the abovenamed Abraham Du Bois by his wife Margaret Deyo. He migrated from his birthplace to the inherited tract in Hillsborough Township, Somerset County, New Jersey, abovenamed, by 1715, in which year he was listed as a private in Colonel Thomas Farmer's New Jersey militia. By a deed of 26 March 1726, Peter Sonmans of New Jersey conveyed to Abraham Du Bois of same Province, for 750 pounds money of New York, a 1500 acre tract on the southwest line of grantee's lands and extending further southeastward to the line of the "Harlingen Tract". (See diagram in Snell's History of Hunterdon and Somerset Counties, page 774). Abraham³ Du Bois of Somerset County, New Jersey in his will of 22 January 1755, proved 4 April 1758, stated that "whereas I have caused my lands and Real Estate Lying and being in Somerset County aforesaid to be surveyed and layd out into Several lotts and parcells and on the Draught have Distinguished the same by numbers vizt. 1-2-3-4-5- & 6, the whole Tract together contains something upwards to two thousand two hundred acres, and have given Deeds to my son Abraham and to my several daughters and their husbands." The children of Abraham³ Du Bois and his wife Marie La Resiliere (Larzalere) were 1. Francoise, bapt., 22 October 1718 at Raritan, who mar. Brogon Hoff; 2. Margaret, bapt. 9 Apr. 1720 at Readington; 3. Marie bapt. 3 Dec. 1721 there, who mar. George Reyerse; 4. Catherine who mar. David Gano; 5. Abraham of whom further; 6. Elizabeth, bapt. 3 Apr. 1728 at Harlingen, who mar. Stephen Gano; 7. Heater, bapt. 12 Aug. 1730 there; 8. Nicholas, bapt. 14 June 1732 there, who died before 1755; 9. Rebecca, bapt. in May 1734 there, who mar. Frederick Van Vliet; and 10. a daughter, possibly one of the above, who mar. one Joubert. Abraham³ Du Bois was one of the two elders named at the formation of a Reformed Dutch congregation at Neshanic, two miles west of his home, on 25 Aug. 1752. Since he had resided upon his 2200 acres as described, from 1715

to his death in 1758, it is obvious that the house here surveyed which bears his initials and the figures 1757 carved in its masonry was a late replacement of his primitive homestead there.

Abraham⁴ Du Bois, born 19 January 1725 on his father's estate in Hillsborough Township, Somerset County, New Jersey, as abovesaid, died there (intestate) on 5 Nov. 1792, only surviving son of Abraham³ Du Bois and having married, by license bond of 22 Oct. 1747, Jane Van Dyck who was bapt. 1 Jan. 1729 in the Dutch church at Readington, daughter of Hendrick and Margaret (Van Derveer) Van Dyck. He served on the Committee of Safety for the township in 1776 and 1777 as a patriot in the Revolution. Administration on his estate was granted to (his son) Nicholas Du Bois who with his brother-in-law John Baird gave bond dated 13 November 1792. Evidently, as only son, he had received the homestead lot in the six part division of his father's real estate, the house here surveyed, but the deed to him which is mentioned in the latter's will of 1755 does not appear on record. Further evidence of the residence of the Abraham⁴ Du Bois in this house is found in the initials N.D.B. 1794 of his son Nicholas (who is of record as owner) which are carved under those of 1757. The children of Abraham⁴ Du Bois were 1. Abraham⁵ of Philadelphia, silversmith; 2. Minna (Dominicus) of Great Bend, Pennsylvania; 3. Nicholas of whom further; 4. Mary who mar. Abraham Teyssen; 5. Margaret who mar. Abraham Staats of Hillsborough, and of South Brook in this county; and 6. Catherine who married 14 March 1779, Major John Baird of Griggstown in this county, of whom further.

The 605 acre plantation of Abraham⁴ Du Bois, deceased intestate, was accordingly divided into nine shares among the three sons and three daughters, under the law. By deeds of 1 May 1793, two of the latter, Margaret Staats and Catherine Baird, and their husbands, conveyed each her one share to her brother Nicholas Du Bois, and by deeds of 21 Dec. 1793, the three sons divided a 634 acre plantation of their late

father, by which Nicholas Du Bois (the only one of the three to remain on the homestead) received a 139 acre lot on the southeast side of Amwell Road (which traversed the original 2200 estate of their grandfather), "with all and singular the Houses, Barns" etc. Nicholas Du Bois took possession of the homestead soon after accordingly as his initials and 1794 inscribed on it signify, and died there between 5 April 1822 and 16 Dec. 1825, the dates of his will and its probate. Evidently he had no issue, for he devised all his lands to his nephew, Abraham Du Bois Baird and appointed him sole executor.

Abraham Du Bois⁶ Baird, born 19 December 1781, son of Major John and Catherine⁶ (Du Bois) Baird of Griggstown, Somerset County, sole heir of his uncle Nicholas Du Bois of Hillsborough, removed from Griggstown and succeeded the latter in this house in 1823. He died there 24 July 1842, intestate, leaving a widow Sarah (Morgan) Baird, and having had fourteen children including William, Catherine, who married Henry Wilson, Elizabeth who married James V. Brokaw, Alice who married Samuel C. Christopher, Andrew Morgan, Nicholas Du Bois, Abraham Staats, Mary Staats who married Henry A. Brokaw, Susan Louise, and Rebecca, all surviving him. In the sale of the four lots into which the farm was divided after the death of Abraham D. Baird, the Commissioners appointed therefor by the Orphans Court conveyed to the widow Sarah Baird by deed of 25 March 1851 "the homestead part designated on the map as No. 1" for \$4921, being 111 acres on which this house is situated. By deed of 29 March 1856, the estate of Abraham D. Baird and Sarah Baird deceased, by Commissioners appointed to divide the same, conveyed to the four sons-in-law above mentioned, J. V. Brokaw, H. A. Brokaw, H. Wilson and S. C. Christopher, all of Hillsborough Township, the said lot "No. 1 The Homestead". Three of these parties conveyed the same to the fourth, Henry A. Brokaw, for \$4075, by their deed of 2 April 1856.

From Brokaw the house and lot went to Thomas Hall by Deed of 1858, thence to Nicholas N. Williamson 1859, to Andrew Robbins 1861, to Albert C. Robbins 1866, to John V. Robbins and Thos. C. Stryker 1867 in a division of the tract, and Stryker became sole owner in 1871. He sold it to William Michels of Newark in 1875, whence it went to Theo. Sanders in 1876, to Robert R. Stryker 1877. Stryker sold the lower 69 acres "with all and singular the houses" to Jonathan Smith in 1900 and the upper forty-two acres of the farm likewise with "the houses", to Jas. W. Hawk in 1905. Smith sold his part to Stephen Tissieres of New York City in 1906, whence it went to Geo. L. Delatour 1911, to Katherina Laufer of Jamaica L-1. 1913, and to Charles Eisler of Newark, New Jersey, 1928, while the estate of Hawk sold his part to Edgar M. Easton of Seneca Falls, New York, 1908, and he to Pearl B. Jaekel of Summit, New Jersey, 1912, who sold to Aaron Mintz of New York City 1921, and he to Jacques Rieur of same city 1922, whence to Joseph Glickman of Brooklyn, 1924, and to Charles Eisler of Newark, 1926. The last named thus reassembled the Baird homestead lot of 111 acres, acquiring the ancient Du Bois house thereon (here surveyed), but he now resides in a modern house on the same lane leading north from it to the Old Amwell Road where a sign board "Eisler Farm" a short distance west of the hamlet of Frankfort marks the entry.

Bibliography:

Somerset County Historical Quarterly, vol. 4, p. 142; 5 p. 194; 7 pp. 133 and 178; 8 p. 35

East New Jersey Deed Books - K (small)
p. 89 and K p. 121

Original will of Abraham Du Bois, 1755

New Jersey Archives, vol. 22, p. 110

Somerset County Will Book C, p. 239

Somerset County Deed Books

Survey drawings and photographs -
personal examination of the house

Architectural Analysis:

Constructed of a 22 inch masonry wall of local brownstone laid up in broken range ashlar with lime cement mortar pointing in a rectangular plan of 42 feet 2 inches front by 33 feet 4 inches gable end, the front and rear walls rise 11 feet 4 inches to the 8 by 8 inch wall plate. The resulting one story and garret house of two rooms on either side of a central hall, an unfinished garret 9 feet above the first floor and a fully excavated cellar 6 feet below that level remains unaltered in fabric but has been unoccupied for many years.

A-trusses of timber, some 3 feet 10 inches on centers, the horizontal member being but 6 feet above the garret floor, carrying the scantling to which the present wood shingles are nailed. Two windows each of two sash, in each of the gable end walls serve to light this garret. A brick chimney is built into the inside of these end walls to serve the fireplaces in the first floor rooms.

Particularly remarkable are the windows in the south front, in which a segmental stone arch is constructed above the wood head of the window frame, the intervening small space being filled with masonry. The comparatively delicate scale of the muntins in the sash of these windows indicates that replacement of the originals, but the small size of the lights and there being twelve of them in the upper and the lower sash suggests that the original glass has been reset accordingly. The sash and its

glass in the right hand window of the north or rear elevation is obviously of a later date, as the larger size of the lights indicates. The four panel shutters, however, are of early date if not original.

The chief alteration to this house fortunately does not affect the fabric itself, being the substitution of a front doorway having glass side lights and transom, all in the detail familiar to the Greek Revival period of 1820-1850. A mantelpiece now detached and standing in the largest of the four rooms, is likewise a substitution of the same period of design, the fireplace having then been altered accordingly. It is likely that the very simple canopied stoep at the front door is another addition at that later date. Certainly the rear entrance door to the center hall bears the earmarks of that period, its upper panels having since been opened for glass inserts.

The only original entrance door (and it may have been the original front door reset here) is found at the left hand end of the east gable end wall. It is constructed of three 12 inch boards battened horizontally on the inside, and is made in two parts, upper and lower, independently, as in all of the houses in the predominantly Dutch settlements in the Raritan Valley. The pair of handwrought iron hinges on each of the two sections, and the latches likewise, are of a fine type of early craftsmanship. A photograph of this house taken about 1890 shows a clapboarded frame addition of one story extending some 14 feet from the east gable end, apparently erected ca. 1800. This door then served as the only means of access between the older house and the annex, and may be inserted accordingly at the latter date as suggested.

Carved in a stone near the left hand end of the south front elevation (see drawing and photo)

are the dates 1757, 1768, the latter somewhat scratched out for some reason not apparent. Just around the corner, on the west gable end, is another stone inscribed 1757. Whether this indicates the date of erection as usual, is not obvious, for the house appears older by some years. But it does serve to show that it was occupied in 1757, which is a year previous to the death of Abraham³ Du Bois, the progenitor of this Huguenot family in Hillsborough Township. But, since he is known to have resided there as early as 1715, this house must have been a replacement of his more primitive home on his original 690 acre tract.

Likewise, on a stone some three feet long, in the second course below the one inscribed as above is cut A. D. B. N. D. B. 1794, which indicates that Nicholas Du Bois took possession of this house in that year, after the death of his father, Abraham⁴ Du Bois, on 5 November 1792.

Lewis D. Cook

Supervising Historian

Approved:

Seymour Williams

SEYMOUR WILLIAMS, F.A.I.A.
District Officer

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